

AIR WAR COLLEGE

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HOW DO THE INSTRUMENTS OF POWER DEFINE THE TERRORIST ORGANIZATION

AL-SHABAAB?



By

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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6 April 2017

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## **Biography**

Lieutenant Colonel Keith D. Wilson entered the Air Force in 1997 as a graduate of the Alabama State University Air Force ROTC program. As a master badge Cyberspace Officer, he has held several key cyber position at various levels to include squadron, Major Command, Headquarters Air Force and as a squadron commander. He recently returned from a deployment in Djibouti, Africa, supporting Combined Task Force – Horn of Africa as its only Knowledge Management Officer. He is currently a student at the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.



## **Abstract**

The terrorist group affectionately known as “Al-Shabaab,” remains a threat to security and legitimate governance in the African country of Somalia. As a result of a security and governance vacuum, the group has managed to capitalize on cultural norms, and sometimes transcending clan politics to establish an enduring and growing presence where other organizations have fallen short. Understanding the cultural structures in Somalia is key to addressing the concerns of the people, and thereby undermining the ability of Al-Shabaab to survive. While only one among many organizations operating autonomously in the country, it is by far the most organized. First, this paper will lay the foundational context of Al-Shabaab and show its stages of progression since its establishment in 2006. Afterwards, the paper will show how the Instruments of Power (IOP) were utilized at the organizational level, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the organization.

## Introduction

The increasing numbers of terrorist acts across the globe are startling, especially in isolationist country like the United States where they are making growing headlines.<sup>1</sup> However, over 8,000 miles away in the Horn of Africa, acts of terrorism seem to only garner a raised brow, as they have become commonplace to those residing there. Over the years, Somalia citizens have seen the rise and fall of violent groups contending for control. With an ongoing power struggle, it has been without a legitimate government since early in the 1990s when former President, Siad Barre was removed. As a result of its political instability and poverty, terrorists and radical Islamic organizations have often sought safe haven in the Somali nation.<sup>2</sup> However, where other violent groups have come and gone like the noonday sun, Al-Shabaab sometimes known as “the Youth,”<sup>3</sup> has seemed to find a way to flourish. Beginning as a fledgling organization in 2005 with only 33 core members, they have grown into a force of several thousand in a little over a decade.<sup>4</sup> However, the total size of Al-Shabaab at any point in time of is not positively clear.<sup>5</sup> This paper examines the Instruments of Power (IOP) found in Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States, Joint Publication 1. The joint publication describes “Instruments of Power” as the “ability to influence events to its advantage” based mostly on the will of the people, institutions, strength of relations with like-minded partners, and effectiveness of its government to implement them.”<sup>6</sup> The paper will overlay the IOPs across the years segmented between the years of 2006-2016 to explain Al-Shabaab’s organizational strengths and weakness leading to its current status. The IOPs of Diplomatic, Economic, Informational and Military were originally

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<sup>1</sup>Rabasa, Angel. Radical Islam in East Africa. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp, 2009, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Oberg, 13

<sup>3</sup> Hansen, Stig J. Al-Shabaab in Somalia : the history and ideology of a militant Islamist group, 2005-2012. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>5</sup> Oberg, 16

<sup>6</sup> Joint Publication 1, Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States, 14 November 2000 -

developed for nation states (“Culture” has recently been added in other readings, but not yet included in JP1). As a result, a modified set of definitions was developed to create context in how they will apply to Al-Shabaab at the organizational level. First is the “diplomatic” IOP, which is defined as the influence of an organization’s situation through agreements, negotiations with entities outside of Al-Shabaab. Diplomacy in this sense can be positive or negative actions to influence behavior. Next, is the “information” IOP, which is how the organization communicates its ideology, intent, recruitment, and engagements to various targeted audiences. This “soft power” can include usage of blogs, social media, YouTube and global networks. The “military” portion of the IOP is tied to the use of force to achieve a tactical, operational or strategic outcome. This includes everything from mil-to-mil engagement with other forces, terrorist acts against others outside the organization. Lastly, the “economic” IOP is defined as the method in which the organization uses to gain economic resources to further its objectives. Traditional state actors lean on policy, trade agreements to influence economic outcomes. However, in the absence of those types of tools, methods in this case can be things like piracy, taxation, etc.

### **Culture as an Undercurrent**

According to Webster’s Dictionary, culture is defined as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group shared by people in a place or time”.<sup>7</sup> In addition, culture is an “influential variable helps to focus attention on the context in which certain decisions are made”<sup>8</sup>, allowing it to be used to fit one’s needs. These factors serve

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<sup>7</sup> Culture.” Merriam-Webster.com. 2016. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture>

<sup>8</sup> Porter, Patrick. *Military Orientalism : Eastern war through Western eyes*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013, 56.

as a foundation, which impact the interest, recruiting, support and loyalty of this organization.

### *Clan System*

One of the most resilient features of Somali society is the clan relationship. In the 2011 Pew Research Center Report, it shows the nation of Somalia is about 98 percent Muslim, and much of it with clan ties.<sup>9</sup> As Lewis points out, while the Somali nation-state is an “accidental aggregate of peoples and tribes thrown together more or less by geographic boundaries . . . . the clans serve as the basic building blocks of Somali society” (2004, p. 489). The strength of this cultural perspective is encapsulated in this Bedouin saying: “My full brother and I against my half-brother, my brother and I against my father, my father's household against my uncle's household, our two households against the rest of the immediate kin, the immediate kin against non-immediate members of my clan, my clan against other clans, and, finally, my nation and I against the world.”<sup>10</sup> It is clear as mud now...right? Basically, depending on the context, a man, a group of men, or even a state may be one's friends or foes.<sup>11</sup> Al-Shabaab's clan associations are foundational and include the Dir, Hawiye, Isaaq and Darod, which have been operating outside and alongside the government structure for years.<sup>12</sup> In the words of Hansen, the Somali clan system “commands more than loyalty”, and serves as a “constructed filter for social reality.”<sup>13</sup> Al Shabaab effectively used the clan system to grow its force and spread its influence, and ideology. The social structures of several of the Somalia clans are based on the concept of “adoption or assimilation of foreign clansmen.”<sup>14</sup> This view often used by Al Shabaab allows them to access

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/table-muslim-population-by-country/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/02/world/africa/al-shabaab-explainer/index.html>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/02/world/africa/al-shabaab-explainer/index.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/somalia/clans.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Hansen., Al Shabaab in East Africa, 7

<sup>14</sup> Lewis, I. M. Understanding Somalia and Somaliland : culture, history, society. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, 4.

to necessary resources when required.<sup>15</sup> For example, if there was intervention from other bordering countries in Somali affairs, “pro-Shabaab” clans could always be counted on to provide weapons, food or sanctuary support. Following the Ethiopian withdrawal from Mogadishu in 2009, the organization was able to acquire large areas of land in which to set up training camps.<sup>16</sup> This bolstered the number of clans eager to join in Al Shabaab’s acquisition.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, pressing multi-clan participation stressed the organization, and became a part of clan conflicts as Al-Shabaab attempted to form governance structures in majority clan populated cities.<sup>18</sup> Since the beginning of 2013, there has been a resurgence of inter-clan fighting over access to land and other business resources<sup>19</sup>

### *Kinship*

Like clan systems, kinship also provides key relationships aiding in Al Shabaab’s overall support. According to Lewis, “the most persuasive organizational principle in traditional Somali social factor is kinship.”<sup>20</sup> Collectively, these key areas were influential to effectively reaching the Somalia Diaspora. A diaspora is defined as a community who share “a common origin who usually reside on a permanent basis, outside of the borders of their claimed homeland.”<sup>21</sup> Since Al-Shabaab has emerged as a radical force in Somalia, so too has the group’s recruiting refined itself in the targeting of western Somali Diaspora communities, including those in the United States, Britain, Australia, and the Netherlands.<sup>22</sup> ~~A unique aspect of Al Shabaab is its worldwide draw, as it has recruited hundreds of recruits from Western countries.~~ In his article, Mulligan

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<sup>15</sup> Hansen., Al Shabaab in East Africa, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Training camps

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S\\_2014\\_726.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2014_726.pdf), p.39

<sup>20</sup> Lewis, Understanding Somalia and Somaliland, 49.

<sup>21</sup> (Barth, 2003, p. 452).

<sup>22</sup> KohlmanXXX



points out the recruitment rhetoric directed at the Diaspora youth in the U.S. regularly includes rebuke such as “you’ve lost your character, you’ve abandoned your culture, your people, your values and your religion” and attempts to convince the youth their efforts could more honorably directed towards the benefit of its family.<sup>23</sup> These Diaspora have effectively served as conduits between host and homelands, providing significant economic support. The support by Diaspora is believed by some related to slow-moving political and socioeconomic integration of host nation assimilation in the host countries.<sup>24</sup> However, most Diaspora communities with ongoing connections to their homeland have a sense of obligation to its nation and family.<sup>25</sup> Al-Shabaab effectively tapped into this resource; a term Patterson calls “development by the Diaspora.”<sup>26</sup> This sense can sometimes be stronger for those second and third generations who have never lived in their homeland.”<sup>27</sup> Conversely, it also increased support for Al-Shabaab, who was seen as a contributor to discipline and justice. Sheikh Ahmed Matan, a member of Britain's Somali community, said he knows of hundreds of young Somali men living in the West who returned to Somalia for terrorist training.<sup>28</sup>

### *Nationalism*

After the invasion of Somalia in 2006, the group began to focus more on nationalism to rally needed support.<sup>29</sup> This intangible factor was translated into a strong detest ultimately building resolve, as the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Christian Ethiopian army

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<sup>23</sup> Mulligan, 2009

<sup>24</sup> Hansen., Al Shabaab in East Africa, 11.

<sup>25</sup> Patterson, Rubin, “Transnationalism: Diaspora-Homeland Development.” Social Forces, 84(4), 1896.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 1892.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 1896.

<sup>28</sup> Yan, Holly., “What is Al Shabaab, and what does it want?”, April 2, 2015.

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/02/world/africa/al-shabaab-explainer/index.html>

<sup>29</sup> Young, 25

was painted as occupiers instead of liberators.<sup>30</sup> The occupation made the Somali population “radically angry, a sentiment echoed nationally and abroad with the Somali Diaspora Network accusing the TFG and Ethiopians of pursuing a campaign of collective punishment and genocide.”<sup>31</sup> ~~Al Shabaab, despite its claim that it places its “Islamic” identity over any other form of identity, has even made appeals in some of its media releases to Somali nationalism and pride,~~<sup>32</sup>

### *Religion*

Although nationalism played a pivotal role in Al-Shabaab’s success, religion has been just as important. Religion is defined as an “organized belief system that organizes society, shapes behavior and structures what is considered normal within a community.”<sup>33</sup> Throughout history, religion has been a strong influencer to shape the actions of people. Islam is the official religion of Somalia and with very few exceptions Somalia remains one of the most religiously homogeneous countries in the world with an estimated 99 percent of all Somalis being practicing Sunni Muslims.<sup>34</sup> Somalis as a people are said to have practiced Islam for over a thousand years.<sup>35</sup> In Somalia, Islamic religious leaders were well respected due to cultural norms and continued support of the local population during times of instability and lack.<sup>36</sup> The fact Al-Shabaab was the “first Somali organization enticing large numbers of non-Somalis into its

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<sup>30</sup> Young, 27

<sup>31</sup> Mulligan, Scott E. Radicalization within the Somali-American Diaspora: Countering the Homgrown Terrorist Threat, Naval Postgraduate School, Dec 2009. pX

<sup>32</sup> The Resilience of al-Shabaab

April 22, 2016 Author(s): Christopher Anzalone

<sup>33</sup> “Religion.” Merriam-Webster.com. 2016. <http://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/religion>

<sup>34</sup> Mapping the Global Muslim Population <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population/>, 7 October, 2009

<sup>35</sup> Mulligan, 39

<sup>36</sup> Hansen, Al Shabaab in East Africa, 4.

ranks,”<sup>37</sup> show the importance of religion. Some sources approximate an upward number of about 20 percent.<sup>38</sup> ~~Although Somali religious figures taking up arms are frowned on, it is acceptable if there is a religious cause.~~<sup>39</sup> Religion is an important factor in person’s life, but arguably a deeper feature of an individual is their personhood.

### *Personhood*

Another area of culture being used to further Al-Shabaab’s success is personhood. According to statement made by Menkiti, an African philosopher “the various societies found in traditional Africa routinely accept that personhood is the sort of thing which has to be attained, and is attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of the various obligations defined by one's stations.” It is the carrying out of these obligations that transforms one from the status of early child-hood.”<sup>40</sup> For example, multiple marriages and continuous children sometimes produced Somalia clan elders with 100 or more living descendents.<sup>41</sup> This is tied to the cultural influence of personhood ensuring their longevity through kids.<sup>42</sup> However, over time these large families produce men with few economic opportunities, making them prime candidates for terrorist recruits.<sup>43</sup> Some men see joining Al-Shabaab as an viable opportunity in a struggling economy to gain increased personal status through power and steady pay, therefore influencing their status.<sup>44</sup> For example, there was a

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>39</sup> Lewis, Understanding Somalia and Somaliland, 21.

<sup>40</sup> Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy., “African Ethics”, September 9, 2010.

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/african-ethics/#MorPer>

<sup>41</sup> Lewis, Understanding Somalia and Somaliland, 12.

<sup>42</sup> John L. Comaroff & Jean Comaroff (2001) On Personhood: An Anthropological Perspective from Africa, *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, 7:2, 271

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 271

<sup>44</sup> Hansen, Al Shabaab in East Africa, 9.

story told of a Somali national from Minneapolis, Minnesota.<sup>45</sup> The only employment he could find was at Walmart. As a result, this impacted his marriage prospects, “having one family decline his offer to marry their daughter, stating that she would “end up on welfare.”<sup>46</sup> In early 2008, he disappeared from the Somali community and later emerged in southern Somalia. He later communicated with other Diaspora, “bragging about his position within the terrorist organization, and how he was married and important and they could have the same.”<sup>47</sup>

## TIMELINE

### **Years: 2006-2009 – Birth of an Organization**

In 2006, a coalition of sharia courts, to include militias, clerics, local leaders, developed what was known as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). After the fall of Barre this Islamist movement, took over most major cities in the region including the capital Mogadishu.<sup>48</sup> Most Somalis initially saw the ICU as a good thing as general order was established. However, the ICU, also started to force out the more moderate perspectives out of its movement in favor of hardliners supporting “sharia law.” These were arguably Al-Shabaabs most successful years, as they accumulated and controlled the capital and most town areas.

### *Diplomatic Power (2006-2009)*

The “diplomatic” IOP, is the influence of an organization’s situation through agreements, negotiations with entities outside of Al-Shabaab. Diplomacy in this sense can be positive or negative actions to influence behavior. During Al-Shabaab’s early years its

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<sup>45</sup> Elliott, 2009)

<sup>46</sup> Elliott, 2009 (Mulligan, 56)

<sup>47</sup> Elliott, 2009 p8

<sup>48</sup> Hansen, Stig J. Al-Shabaab in Somalia : the history and ideology of a militant Islamist group, 2005-2012. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, 4

diplomatic power was in a fledgling status state and does not appear to be a significant consideration in its planning and execution. Initially was only the militant portion of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) with Sharif Sheikh Ahmed as leader. As the ideology between it and the ICU began to diverge, Al-Shabaab split with the ICU. This was primarily as a result it wanting to implement a more harsh governance using “sharia law” as the foundation. Although many Somali citizens did not agree with Al-Shabaab’s strict practices, they were appreciative of the law and order established. Prior to the Al-Shabaab’s takeover in (200X), the rural population had to deal with taxation and threats from multiple warlords and they moved across multiple territories.<sup>49</sup> As Al-Shabaab’s increased its control across Somalia, it was able to keep non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from operating, which forced the population to rely on it for the little support it provided. During this time, few local humanitarian organizations were allowed to safely function.<sup>50</sup> Several aid workers were even executed and the group began imposing strict conditions on the remaining ones while extorting them.<sup>51</sup> Later in 2008, the U.S. State Department officially designated Al-Shabaab as a terrorist organization. Although this action brought increased attention from anti-terrorism efforts, it also provided the organization the international legitimacy sought by some of its leaders. The distinction was primarily based upon the group’s admitted ties with al Qaeda,<sup>52</sup> although Al-Qaeda did not acknowledge this until years later.

### *Informational Power (2006-2009)*

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<sup>49</sup> (issue w/ multiple warlords)

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-resilience-of-al-shabaab>

The Resilience of al-Shabaab, April 22, 2016 Author(s): Christopher Anzalone

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/aug/08/al-shabaab-mogadishu-somalia>

<sup>52</sup> US Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/143205.htm>

The “information” IOP, which is how the organization communicates its ideology, intent, recruitment, and engagements to various targeted audiences. This “soft power” can include usage of blogs, social media, YouTube and global networks. Since the early 1990’s the networked community has grown from millions to billions,<sup>53</sup> serving as a cheap method of communicating with audiences across geographic boundaries. The use of technology by terrorist organizations to spread extremist ideology is nothing new, as Al-Qaeda had all but perfected the craft. Al-Shabaab took note and began pushing its early message of to increase support and legitimacy. The Internet enables terrorist organizations to expand their reach, create virtual communities of like-minded extremists, and capture a larger universe of more-diverse talents and skills.<sup>54</sup> This communication has included the more traditional methods of using basements, mosques, community centers, and sporting activities.<sup>55</sup> Al-Shabaab also took advantage of an early alliance with religious leaders and their clans to push Christian Ethiopians out of Somalia in 2009.<sup>56</sup> These ties served Al-Shabaab well, as it helped spread its message of Islam-laced ideology to those who may not have otherwise been interested. For example, an American citizen known as Omar Shafik Hammami was also persuaded by internationally benign organization.<sup>57</sup> The small town Alabama resident ascended the ranks of Al-Shabaab to become the most wanted American jihadists. There are similar examples across the globe where westerners are continually being influenced by religion laced with jihadist ideology. In 2008, Al-Shabaab began disseminating recruitment messages via the Internet to western diaspora communities stating, “there are

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<sup>53</sup> Shirky, Clay, *The Political Power of Social Media; Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change*, p1 (NSDM 6304-R3)

<sup>54</sup> Jenkins, Brian, *Is Al Qaeda’s Internet Strategy Working?*, Testimony Presented before the House Security Committee, Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence on Dec 6, 2011 on <https://homeland.house.gov/files/Testimony%20Jenkins%20.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Mulligan, 17

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>57</sup> Alabama terrorist (Web Site)

training camps in Somalia . . .that have opened their doors so that you join them. So be truthful with Allah and answer the call of jihad and prefer the lasting over the perishing and the next life over the present life.”<sup>58</sup> Conversely, Sageman contends that focusing on religious ideology in terrorism is largely a mistake. He concludes, “terrorists are predominantly driven by social bonds, and that “cliques” should be considered greater motivators than any firmly held understanding of global jihad.”<sup>59</sup> In areas it still controls, Al-Shabab enforces its version of sharia, prohibiting various types of entertainment, smoking, and other activities.<sup>60</sup> Also, stonings and amputations are aggressively used as punishment on suspected thieves and adulterers.<sup>61</sup> Through the reinforcement of religion and nationalism, the organization solidified its platform through targeted communication tools.

#### *Military Power (2006-2009)*

The “military” portion of the IOP is tied to the use of force to achieve a tactical, operational or strategic outcome. This includes everything from mil-to-mil engagement with other forces, terrorist acts against others outside the organization. Al-Shabaab began in 2006 as a military extremity of the ICU, later overpowering the coalition of warlords in power at the time. Once the Christian Ethiopian Army invaded Somalia a year later, it became a turning point as it stimulated the local population to support Al-Shabaab exponentially increase funding and recruiting. The group continued to gain control over vast territory in central and southern Somalia.<sup>62</sup> It began to “organizing guerilla assaults, including bombings and assassinations, on

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<sup>58</sup> (Grace, 2008).(Mulligan, 2)

<sup>59</sup> Sageman, (2004, p. 154)

<sup>60</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/somalia/al-shabab/p18650>

<sup>61</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/somalia/al-shabab/p18650>

<sup>62</sup> Al-Shabab: An Interactive Timeline, <http://www.msnbc.com/ronan-farrow-daily/al-shabab-interactive-timeline>

Ethiopian forces.” ~~A few years later, the US State Department designates Al-Shabab as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.~~ The efforts are summed up as follows. Within the first two months of 2008 there were bombings in the cities of Mogodishu and Bossaso killing 38 and injuring twice as many. In the Fall of the same year, there was an attack on the Somalia presidential compound which killed 15. The next month a Somali-American from who trained with al-Shabab, becomes the first known U.S. suicide bomber after killing 24 in Hargeisa. During the same month a mortar struck a marketplace in Mogadishu killing 17. In 2009, the following year, a suicide car bombing was activated against an AMISOM base, which murdered 11. In December during the same year, there was a suicide bombing executed during a college graduation ceremony in the capital city, which killed 23.

#### *Economic Power (2006-2009)*

Lastly, the “economic” IOP is defined as the method in which the organization uses to gain economic resources to further its objectives. Traditional state actors lean on policy, trade agreements to influence economic outcomes. However, in the absence of those types of tools, methods in this case can be things like piracy, taxation, etc. The ability to finance efforts has always been critical to a terrorist organization’s existence. Al-Shabaab’s organization initially had to rely on resources from warlord piracy and its initial connections with local clans. Later, the group built up an extensive racketeering operation in Kismayo after seizing control of the southern port city and its economy in 2008.<sup>63</sup> While the port was under its control, it became the main source of revenue for the group. According to one report, the United Nations believes that “Al-Shabaab collects an estimated U.S. \$35–50 million annually in custom tolls and taxes on

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<sup>63</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/somalia/al-shabab/p18650>



businesses in Kismayo.”<sup>64</sup> Another source of income during this timeframe was through piracy. Contrary to popular belief, Al-Shabaab did not directly participate in the piracy, but did benefit from the aforementioned port taxes on captured ships.<sup>65</sup> Al-Shabaab has quickly capitalized on its influx of funding, partially through its organizational structure to handle its finances. This range of administrative bodies includes the Ministry of Finance, which has domestic and international responsibilities for the group. Although most taxes are collected from local members, the finance minister looks at the economy from a strategic perspective to maximize the revenue from its established programs.<sup>66</sup> Although there are other key reasons recruits join Al-Shabaab, there is evidence that many former members joined due to financial reasons or the “mean green.” An article cited there was promise of a hefty salary of about \$600 per month on average.<sup>67</sup> In Somalia, where the unemployment rate for men ages 14 to 29 is one of the world’s highest at 67 percent,<sup>68</sup> several hundred dollars a month is enticing regardless of whether you agree with the Al-Shabaab’s ideology or not. Unfortunately for Al-Shabaab, since the US State Department designated as a “Foreign Terrorist Organization,”<sup>69</sup> it has become illegal for US citizens to provide resources to the organization. In 2009 alone, more than 20 American men were charged or indicted on charges of providing support to Al-Shabaab.<sup>70</sup> In a Department of Justice report, they pursued a number of cases against suspects from the Somali community in

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<sup>64</sup> LTC Geoffrey Kambere FINANCING AL SHABAAB: THE VITAL PORT OF KISMAYO, <https://globalecco.org/financing-al-shabaab-the-vital-port-of-kismayo>

<sup>65</sup> Oberg, 28

<sup>66</sup> Tom Keatinge, RUSI.org, Whitehall Report 2-14 [https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201412\\_whr\\_2-14\\_keatinge\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201412_whr_2-14_keatinge_web_0.pdf), p7

<sup>67</sup> Tom Keatinge, RUSI.org, Whitehall Report 2-14 [https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201412\\_whr\\_2-14\\_keatinge\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201412_whr_2-14_keatinge_web_0.pdf), p9

<sup>68</sup> Fortune of Africa, <http://fortuneofafrica.com/somalia/>

<sup>69</sup> US Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/143205.htm>

<sup>70</sup> Anti Defamation League [http://archive.adl.org/terrorism/symbols/al\\_shabaab.html](http://archive.adl.org/terrorism/symbols/al_shabaab.html)

Minneapolis, the effort was tagged Operation Rhino.<sup>71</sup> One would think that the crackdown on the organization's economic funding stream would cripple their ability to operate. However, Al-Shabaab has been able to maintain resiliency despite no global banking resource. The remittance sent from abroad uses the "hawala" network that is a trust-based transfer system that is efficient and reliable.<sup>72</sup> This process relies on cultural aspects such as kinship and regional clan ties to be successful.

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## **Years: 2010-2013 – Power Struggles**

### *Diplomatic Power (2010-2013)*

In contrast to the period from 2006 to 2009, Al-Shabaab now controls and administers broader land and communities. As a result, the group is able to administer and govern territory. It matures its operations as it "manages sharia courts and institutes, taxation collection and distribution, clan outreach, and running of schools."<sup>73</sup> In addition, it executes programs providing agricultural, and medical. However, after 2011 territorial losses, it provided services on a reduced scale."<sup>74</sup> Despite its early success, as the saying goes "all good things must come to an end." Between 2012 and 2013, Al-Shabaab experienced a period of major internal discord when a number of prominent leaders began publicly criticizing Godane and his allies.<sup>75</sup> There was heavy criticism on for him not allowing aid into certain impoverished areas among other

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<sup>71</sup> Tom Keatinge, RUSI.org, Whitehall Report 2-14 [https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201412\\_whr\\_2-14\\_keatinge\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201412_whr_2-14_keatinge_web_0.pdf), p12

<sup>72</sup> Tom Keatinge, RUSI.org, Whitehall Report 2-14 [https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201412\\_whr\\_2-14\\_keatinge\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201412_whr_2-14_keatinge_web_0.pdf), p12

<sup>73</sup> Masters, Jonathan, Focus jihadism in Somalia: Al-Shabaab, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-resilience-of-al-shabaab>

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<sup>74</sup> Masters, Jonathan, Focus jihadism in Somalia: Al-Shabaab, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-resilience-of-al-shabaab>

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<sup>75</sup> <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-resilience-of-al-shabaab>

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things. He responded by eradicating the organization of radical ideology dissenters. By late 2013, the internal rifts within Al-Shabaab grew into warfare between Godane's bloc and those of other leaders in the organization.<sup>76</sup> In response, four senior Al-Shabaab commanders were executed while the others fled. In 2013, the United States recognized the Federal Republic of Somalia (FRS) as the new governing body. The development of a US-backed governing body, loss of territory and a robust protected government<sup>77</sup> is causing Al-Shabaab to begin its loss of legitimacy.

### *Informational Power (2010-2013)*

The use of information increasingly served as a critical resource for Al-Shabaab's strategic influence.<sup>78</sup> They continued to use it to use the internet spread their ideology, support, and fear. According to Jenkins, it is still used to “radicalize and recruit new members, provide instruction in tactics and weapons, gather intelligence about potential targets, clandestinely communicate, and support terrorist operations.”<sup>79</sup> A short few years later, Al-Shabaab continued to mature its use of the internet. Recruitment efforts began including video clips which include English speaking narrative set with rap music in the background. These recruitment efforts targeted young Western audiences.<sup>80</sup> At this stage, its informational power was growing, and the focus was expanded to include the, local, regional and international community. An example of its use of information is during its 20XX attack at the Westgate Mall in Kenya. The group tweeted “The Mujahideen entered #Westgate Mall today at around noon and are still inside the

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<sup>76</sup> <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-resilience-of-al-shabaab>

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<sup>77</sup> Mulligan, 36-39

<sup>78</sup> IP1, 23

<sup>79</sup> Jenkins, p1

<sup>80</sup> Patterson, 2009

mall, fighting the #Kenyan Kuffar inside their own turf."<sup>81</sup> The group also continues to use Facebook and YouTube as well. According to Rudolph Atallah, "Al-Shabaab has always been more cutting edge in terms of usage of media." In videos produced during this time period, usually produced in English, focused on the need for jihad and the Islamic world to come to the protection of Islam from its crusaders from the West.<sup>82</sup>

### *Military Power (2010-2013)*

The sustained counter-terrorism pressure and successful overcoming of internal divisions have forced the Al-Shabaab core to become more operationally audacious by placing greater emphasis on exporting its violence beyond the borders of Somalia.<sup>83</sup> This to the phase in which Al-Shabaab began a shift in focus from insurgency to terrorism against "soft targets."<sup>84</sup> Its regional military strategy had solidified. It was now "a resurgent extremist group align itself with and pursue strategies adapted to transnational Al-Qaeda operations."<sup>85</sup> According to Anzalone, these types of attacks slowly evolved as part of the group's military strategy that "mixes both high-profile operations against largely civilian targets, guerilla warfare, and surprise mass attacks on vulnerable AMISOM and SFG positions."<sup>86</sup> Some of the notable attacks during this period include the following: In July 2010, Al-Shabab carried out its first foreign terror attack with

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<sup>81</sup> Mark Gollom Kenya attack: Why al-Shabaab live-tweeted the assault  
Militant group makes use of social media to spread its message

By , [CBC News](#) Posted: Sep 24, 2013 5:02 AM ET <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/kenya-attack-why-al-shabaab-live-tweeted-the-assault-1.1865566>

<sup>82</sup> [Al Kataaib](#) Mogadishu The Crusaders Graveyard

<sup>83</sup> [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S\\_2014\\_726.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2014_726.pdf), p.19

<sup>84</sup> Anzalone, Christopher, The Resilience of al-Shabaab, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point April 22, 2016 <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-resilience-of-al-shabaab>

<sup>85</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/somalia/al-shabab/p18650>

<sup>86</sup> Anzalone, Christopher, The Resilience of al-Shabaab, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point April 22, 2016 <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-resilience-of-al-shabaab>

numerous suicide bombings in Kampala, killing more than 70 people.<sup>87</sup> During the same month, they claimed responsibility for killing over 50 people in Kenya, many who gathered to watch a World Cup soccer match on television.<sup>88</sup> However, The most notable attack occurred in 2013, during a multi-day raid on the Westgate Mall in Kenya. Al-Shabab killed 67 in what is called the deadliest terrorist attack in Kenya in more than 15 years.<sup>89</sup> Of the terrorist attacks, an prominent Al-Shabaab spokesman was quoted saying: “We are sending a message to every country who is willing to send troops to Somalia that they will face attacks on their territory.”<sup>90</sup>

### *Economic Power (2010-2013)*

According to the Africa Research Bulliten, Al-Shabaab benefited heavily during this period from a type of worship and of self-purification called “zakat”. Zakat is considered the third Pillar of Islam, and is a proportion of one's wealth, normally about 2.5%. in 2011.<sup>91</sup> These jihad contributions and religious obligations," account for an additional \$10, according to the report from the U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea.”<sup>92</sup> It is reported that Al-Shabaab even demanded these benefits from two of the largest telecommunications firm and money transfer company to cease operations until they paid.<sup>93</sup> In addition, the Somali Diaspora’s annual contributions to the homeland are estimated to be between 2.5 to 3 billion dollars and serve as one of the cornerstones of the Somali economy.<sup>94</sup> According to the World Bank, the transmittal

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<sup>87</sup> <http://www.cfr.org/somalia/al-shabab/p18650>

<sup>88</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-06-17/kenya-attack-al-shabaab-terrorist-massacre-world-cup/5528586>

<sup>89</sup> [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S\\_2014\\_726.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2014_726.pdf), p.283

<sup>90</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/somalia/al-shabab/p18650>

<sup>91</sup> Africa Research Bulletin, Sep-Oct 2011 <https://www.deepdyve.com/lp/wiley/somalia-al-shabaab-demands-zakat-kwzQB3xnI3>

<sup>92</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/02/world/africa/al-shabaab-explainer/index.html>

<sup>93</sup> Africa Research Bulletin, Sep-Oct 2011 <https://www.deepdyve.com/lp/wiley/somalia-al-shabaab-demands-zakat-kwzQB3xnI3>

<sup>94</sup> (Mulligan, x)

represented 23 percent of the average households claimed remittances as their sole source of income.<sup>95</sup> Al-Shabab also benefits from the importation of sugar, much of which then illegally makes its way into Kenya. According to the UN report, about 10K bags of contraband sugar valued at several hundred thousands dollars is smuggled into Kenya daily.<sup>96</sup> During this period, Al-Shabaab bolstered its system of “taxation on residents within areas it controls and imposes levies not just on aid groups, but also businesses, sales transactions, and land.”<sup>97</sup> In 2011, it was generating about \$80 million per year, from “duties and fees levied at airports and seaports, taxes on goods and services, taxes in kind on domestic produce.”<sup>98</sup> However, in October 2012 the plethora of resources were minimized as Al-Shabaab took a major financial hit at its major funding source. The AMISOM backed by Somali soldiers ousted the terrorist army from charcoal depository and ports in Kismayo. Some experts say this victory along with loss of territory in key economic centers strategically crippled the group.<sup>99</sup> Fortunately, when Al-Shabaab’s leader Godane aligned the group with Al-Qaeda in 2012, it was able to secure funding holes through foreign sympathizers.<sup>100</sup> However, the partnership with Osama Bin Laden and his ties to 9/11 also led to increased military action from AMISOM assisted by US drone strikes.

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## **Years: 2014-Present – Way Ahead**

### *Diplomatic Power (2014-Present)*

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<sup>95</sup> (Mulligan, 3x)

<sup>96</sup> Hiiraan Online, [http://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2012/Feb/22927/un\\_bans\\_trade\\_in\\_charcoal\\_from\\_somalia.aspx](http://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2012/Feb/22927/un_bans_trade_in_charcoal_from_somalia.aspx)

<sup>97</sup> ?

<sup>98</sup> ?

<sup>99</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/somalia/al-shabab/p18650>

<sup>100</sup> Somalia's al-Shabab join al-Qaeda, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-16979440>, February 2012

In 2014, Al-Shabaab's "Emir", Ahmed Godane, was killed as a result of in a drone strike.<sup>101</sup> The later appointment of a new leader continued to drive a wedge in ideological versus nationalism faction in the organization.<sup>102</sup> In addition, since the earlier withdrawal of Ethiopian troops, there had been a decline in support for jihadist in the region."<sup>103</sup> However, Al-Shabaab's leadership continued "presence and strong-arm tactics,"<sup>104</sup> which increased animosity between them and the local population.<sup>105</sup> An Al-Shabaab defector explained, "our commanders were trying to tell us that there's no Somali national flag and no national borders," and the "jihad will never end. Once we finish in Somali, we go to Kenya and then elsewhere."<sup>106</sup> According to Somali expert Abdul Abdulahi, "They occupied a void. There was no good government. People were tired of the clans. But they are hypocrites."<sup>107</sup> As XXXX states, once an insurgency loses the support of the local population, it is finished.<sup>108</sup>

#### *Informational Power (2014-Present)*

Throughout this period, Al-Shabaab has not changed its strategy much from its "Glory Years." However, they continue to advertise the insurgent group's application of governing authority and its "attempt to monopolize violence as a means of both social control and revenue extraction."<sup>109</sup> In addition, the group uses its news media and social media resources to highlight positive messages to the local population. This includes Al-Shabaab senior officials, local clan

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<sup>101</sup> Security Council Report, Report [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S\\_2014\\_726.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2014_726.pdf). 15

<sup>102</sup> Security Council Report, Report [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S\\_2014\\_726.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2014_726.pdf). 16

<sup>103</sup> Gettleman, 2009

<sup>104</sup> ?

<sup>105</sup> ?

<sup>106</sup> Gettleman, 2009

<sup>107</sup> ?

<sup>108</sup> [http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic706700.files/Economics\\_of\\_Insurgency.pdf](http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic706700.files/Economics_of_Insurgency.pdf)

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-resilience-of-al-shabaab>

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elders, and residents discussing the “recapture of territory, reports on insurgent social services, and the work of its various offices, in particular the judiciary.”<sup>110</sup>

#### *Military Power (2014-Present)*

The security environment improved as a result of Al-Shabaab losing control of key areas. In the past few years AMISOM has driven al Shabaab out of important urban strongholds, although it remains active from rural area bases.<sup>111</sup> With the group’s military power being overmatched, they have had to continually transition more to asymmetric warfare methods. As recent as January 2016, islamist militants rammed a car bomb into the gate of a hotel in Somalia's capital Mogadishu killing 28 people.<sup>112</sup> Although these methods are effective, the frequency since 2014 has become fewer and far between.

#### *Economic Power (2014-Present)*

Similar to the other IOPs during this time period, Al-Shabaab’s Economic Power in also suffering, they are basically short of cash.<sup>113</sup> Previously, money allowed it to buy support from the community and provided the intelligence tips that made it so effective. Now, fear of retribution is the main currency. According to some experts, entry-level combatants are defecting as a result of delayed and lower than expected payments. When paid, the advertised payment can fall well below the advertised \$500 salary.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-resilience-of-al-shabaab>

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<sup>111</sup> <http://link.militarytimes.com/click/8692286.69914/aHR0cDovL3d3dy5yZXV0ZXJzLmNvbS9hcnRpY2xlL3VzLXNvbWFsaWEtYXR0YWNrcy1pZGVVTS0JOMTU5MEhC/5874e1a0bcb59cba0e8b4595B525fee3d>

<sup>112</sup> <http://link.militarytimes.com/click/8692286.69914/aHR0cDovL3d3dy5yZXV0ZXJzLmNvbS9hcnRpY2xlL3VzLXNvbWFsaWEtYXR0YWNrcy1pZGVVTS0JOMTU5MEhC/5874e1a0bcb59cba0e8b4595B525fee3d>

<sup>113</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/aug/18/somalia-terrorist-carpenter-al-shabaab>

<sup>114</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/aug/18/somalia-terrorist-carpenter-al-shabaab>



## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the terrorist organization Al Shabaab has been relatively successful in its goal of implementing its ideology locally while gaining international support. Starting out as a fledgling organization, it has exponentially grown in numbers and support. Some of this progress can be attributed to their early relationship with a flourishing Al Qaeda. However, one must factor Al Shabaab's deliberate understanding and Somali cultural undercurrent and the significance of clan ties and kinship, nationalism, religion, and personhood in achieving its goals. Moreover, it must understand the fluctuation of the DIME IOPs. As the organization continues to weaken militarily, this cascades throughout the other IOPs as well. For instance, if the does not have the ability to influence diplomacy through power, it no longer remains credible and will continue to lose strategic territory. Next, from an informational perspective, without its ability to create fear among the population and AMISOM, there is little to influence with. This weakening of the informational IOP can impact the funding fervor of "pro-Shabaab" organizations and Diaspora community. If Al-Shabaab cannot economically support resources for its terrorist acts nor consistently pay its people, the weakness it is currently experiencing will transition it to another Somali terrorist organization "has been."

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